

## **MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION**

### **Regular Meeting**

**March 11, 2013**

7:00 p.m.

Lincoln Center

**PRESENT:** Atwater, Crockett, Hagenow, Leon, Luxenberg, Pattacini, Scappaticci, Walton

**ALSO PRESENT:** Interim Superintendent of Schools Dr. Kisiel, Assistant to the Superintendent for Finance & Management Brooks, Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Personnel Services Matfess

**ABSENT:** Cruz, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Dr. Richardson

#### **A. OPENING**

##### **A.1&2. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m. All in attendance participated in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, led by Chairperson Pattacini.

##### **A.3. ADOPTION OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

**ADOPTED** – Minutes Regular Meeting of the Board of Education of February 25, 2013.

**Secretary Leon moved and Mr. Crockett seconded the motion.**

**6/0/1 – Voted in favor. Ms. Luxenberg abstained.**

#### **B. SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT – PART I**

##### **B.1. VFW Awards**

**Dr. Kisiel** reviewed that we have a proud tradition of participating in essay contests that focus our student’s attention on a variety of patriotic themes. The Voice of Democracy Program is open to high school students and the Patriot’s Pen is open to students from Grades 6-8. Dr. Kisiel welcomed Doris Robotto, VFW Representative, along with her husband, John Robotto, who is a former commander of the Manchester Veteran’s of Foreign Wars Post.

Mrs. Robotto, who is also a past President for the Ladies Auxillary in Manchester, has served two years for the scholarship program for the State of Connecticut. She explained the national scholarship program. This contest was started in 1947. Past winners for the Voice of Democracy are newscaster Charles Kuralt, Anita Bryant, and Attorney General John Ashcroft. Students compete at the local, district, and state level. State winners receive an expense-paid trip to Washington D.C. to compete nationally. The Voice of Democracy winners are eligible to win a \$30,000 academic scholarship. Each student that goes to Washington gets at least \$1,000. Each year the Voice of Democracy awards total \$152,000. The Patriot's Pen follows the same format, with \$5,000 going to the top winner. Annual awards for this program amount to \$46,000. Since Manchester has participated in these programs several years ago we have had a State winner for the Voice of Democracy and also a Patriot's Pen State winner go to Washington.

This years theme for the Voice of Democracy was "Is our Constitution relevant?". The Patriot's Pen theme was, "What I would tell our Founding Fathers." Mrs. Robotto thanked the administration, the Board of Education, the teachers, and the parents for their encouragement and support for participating in this program.

This year the Voice of Democracy winner was Samuel Iacobellis. He also placed third in the district! The Patriot's Pen Award was presented to Theodosia Hatzikostamtis, who placed 3<sup>rd</sup> in the district as well. The second place Patriot's Pen winner was Ashley Restos, who also placed in the district level. The 3<sup>rd</sup> place Patriot's Pen winner was Ching-Ning Hsu.

## **B.2. Board Member Appreciation Month**

**Dr. Kisiel** thanked the Board members for their service and leadership. He noted it has been a pleasure to work with the Manchester Board of Education over the past year and a half. They are dedicated and put our children's education first. He presented them all with a small token of appreciation for their service.

## **C. CONSENT CALENDAR**

**Dr. Kisiel** presented four items on the Consent Calendar for Board approval.

### **C.1. Personnel Action**

Details had already been provided to the Board members in their agenda folders.

### **C.2. Manchester Board of Education Meeting Schedule 2013-2014**

### **C.3. Transfer of Funds**

Details had already been provided to the Board members in their agenda folders.

- Transfer from Buckley Elementary School Administrator Dues/Fees (\$300) and Professional Development (\$750) to Buckley Elementary School Administrator Computer Supplies/Materials Account in the amount of \$1050
- Transfer from Enrichment Instructional Supplies and Materials to Enrichment Field Trips accounts in the amount of \$1800

**C.4. Extended Field Trip Request – Manchester High School – VEX Robotics World Championship – Anaheim, CA. April 17, 2013-April 22, 2013**

**The Chairman called for a motion.**

**Secretary Leon moved and Mr. Crockett seconded the recommendation to adopt the Consent Calendar, item C in our agenda.**

**7/0 - Voted in favor.**

**D. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Ms. Grahame Slogesky, 17 Cumberland Street, stated she is heartbroken over the suggested budget reductions. Ms. Slogesky has a 4<sup>th</sup> grade daughter who plays violin in the orchestra at Waddell and also takes part in the Gifted & Talented Program. Her 5<sup>th</sup> grade son plays trumpet in the band at an 8<sup>th</sup> grade level. In addition, her husband was hired this year as a paraprofessional in the district after being laid off from his job of 16 years, so three members of her family would be directly impacted by some of these suggested cuts. Ms. Slogesky pointed out that local merchants, such as Bellers Music, Dubaldo Music, and Summit Studios will all be impacted if the music program is cut. These programs are some of the attractive reasons she keeps her kids in Manchester schools. These cuts will effect the purchase of houses in town. Ms. Slogesky has been thrilled with the positive changes Dr. Kisiel has made in town and wishes he would stay forever. She feels that cutting these services would not be a positive change and that cutting services that directly effect children is not in the best interest of Manchester's children. She wants to keep her children in Manchester schools, and keep her family in Manchester, but she needs these programs to be able to do that.

Ms. Schutz, 12 Conway Road, understands where Ms. Slogesky is coming from. Her own daughter participated in Bennet and the high school band, graduating in 2002. Ms. Schutz stated that Manchester used to be about education, even with sports. We used to hear about sports, everyone was excited, but we don't hear much about MHS band anymore. She wants the education for the children.

When her daughter wanted to play flute she told her she had to keep her grades up, the number one thing was education. She feels education should be first, music and sports are not a priority. She says Manchester education has gone down. Even her daughter says education is not like it was when she was in school, and even special education is not as good. Ms. Schutz points out that even the community is not coming to Board of Education meetings as much as in the past. People are upset with the Board. She points out that taxpayers cannot give what you want, they can't afford to give you five vans. She told the Board of Directors they should share vehicles. She thinks we don't have the money and she knows a referendum is coming in November and you want the schools fixed. She feels that the SMARTR program makes no sense.

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, recommended the film *Hobbit*, which he feels is a good movie for those 13-years-old and up. He also recommended the Lincoln movie once again. Mr. Stringfellow pointed out that *National Geographic* is celebrating its 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Mr. Stringfellow attended the CABE meeting last week, which talked about diversity in West Hartford Public Schools. He points out we need to be concerned with all students, not just gifted students. He also recommended a Collage Board book, *Campus Visits and College Interviews*, regarding the do's and don'ts of going to college interviews. Last, he suggested a forum on violence at MCC scheduled for March 20<sup>th</sup>, where Chief Montminy and Dr. Kisiel will both participate on the panel.

## **E. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT – PART II**

### **E.1. Bennett Academy School Improvement Plan**

**Dr. Kisiel** noted that last year the former Principal of Bennett was transferred to Illing and Mr. Joseph Chella was then hired as the new Principal of Bennet. Mr. Chella was a principal in Ledyard formerly, and over the last seven months Dr. Kisiel has been impressed with Mr. Chella's major focus on instruction.

Mr. Chella presented a Power Point reviewing his School Improvement Plan, CMT data, and School Performance Index (SPI), along with the school goals. The full presentation is available on the website. Mr. Chella pointed out that this is a time of great change in education and he has been impressed with Manchester triaging what we have to do as a district, and impressed with the district vision.

**Mr. Scappaticci** asked about the STARS Program at Bennett. Mr. Chella explained the positive behavior support program, which "catches" good behavior of students. The students are given coupons when they are caught, and they have raffles for prizes and STARS awards. Mr. Scappaticci notes that the high school also has such a problem and points out that it is crucial to recognize good behavior to impact the culture of the building.

**Ms. Walton** appreciates the PBIS model and notes her child attends Buckley and they do practice Buckley's "Be Safe, Be Respectful, and Be Responsible" at home. She also appreciated the clear data that Mr. Chella presented. Ms. Walton notes that the achievement gap in town is not narrowing at the rate we need it to and this should remain an urgent goal. She wonders what is more important, music or reading, athletics or ELL? This is a tough budget season. Cutting the music program is heartbreaking, but she wonders where do we invest...the enrichment program or closing the achievement gap? Ms. Walton points out that while we score higher than the state average with all subgroups, the state average ranges from the richest Greenwich to the poorest cities and our town shouldn't have such a wide gap as that.

**Mr. Pattacini** asked about the School Performance Index, being that Bennett is a one year school each year new kids would represent new data, so what strategies are being employed to raise these scores when a whole new group of children are tested each year. Mr. Chella agreed that the scores compare apples to oranges and noted that teachers will look for growth over the year. He explained how SRBI Tier II and Tier III interventions are used to focus on the areas needing growth, and when Tier II strategies are not enough a student is moved to a Tier III intervention level, which uses smaller group settings. The data identifies who needs help and then instruction is tailored to fit the needs through the SRBI program. Some students come already identified as Tier II or Tier III from elementary school, while some are newly identified. Mr. Pattacini asked if we are adequately funding Tier II and Tier III interventions. Mr. Chella feels we are. He had previously asked for a math coach and one is being hired. They already have a literacy coach. The goal is not to pull students out of class, but to give them the added instruction in class. Training takes place with coaches weekly and strategies are given to teacher for classroom implementation.

Mr. Pattacini looked at the current data slide with Math showing only 13% at goal or above for NWEA. Mr. Chella explained that NWEA is a pilot, that we are in the process of crossing over to Common Core and NWEA is aligned with the Common Core, so some of the content being tested has not yet been taught. Next year, the content tested will be taught, so those numbers are expected to be higher. Mr. Pattacini also noted that of the 38 students in Tier II and Tier III intervention, 27 made growth.

## **E.2. Safety & Security District Improvement Plan**

**Dr. Kisiel** had provided the Board with input from principals previously, identifying immediate needs in schools. Subsequently, Dr. Kisiel then formed a task force to look at specific recommendations with parents, teachers, and administrators, as well as a representative from both the police and fire

departments. Officer Adam Marois, who has training in safety and security checks in public buildings and schools, has made recommendations for some security improvements and those suggestions will be used as a jumping off point. Security issues were discussed in executive session and the Board has instructed Dr. Kisiel to look at costs on some issues. Dr. Kisiel pointed out some of the immediate security steps that were instituted or improved, such as all visitors having to announce themselves and their business before being admitted to a building, and being required to sign in at the office and wear an identification badge.

**Mr. Pattacini** thanked the administration and committee for their valuable feedback on this thoughtful approach to security.

### **E.3. Potential Budget Reductions**

**Dr. Kisiel** reviewed that the Town General Manager had indicated the budget increase for the Board of Education would be closer to 3.1%, and not the 5.5% that was requested, and the Board had asked Dr. Kisiel to prepare a list of possible reductions. Dr. Kisiel noted these numbers are not set in stone yet, but it would be impossible to reduce the achievement gap with these figures. Dr. Kisiel again reviewed that the Alliance Grant monies cannot be used as a part of the operating budget and will be used for such programs as summer school, Kindergarten orientation for those not having a pre-school experience, a model extended day program at Bowers, and improvements to the teacher and administrator evaluation systems, among other items. Dr. Kisiel further reviewed that had the Board of Education received 2-3% increases each of the past several years, instead of the 0.78-1.78% increases they were given, then 3.1% would probably have been enough this year. Dr. Kisiel's suggested reductions include:

- Textbook account \$50,000
- Technician/Webmaster \$82,421
- Elementary School Teacher \$75,000
- Director of Teaching & Learning \$133,421
- Building Repairs \$170,000
- Security/Safety \$400,000
- Vehicle Replacement \$144,000
- Reduce 3511 Technology \$137,078
- Eliminate TLC and Lutz Funding \$102,764
- Reduce SPED Tuition Projections \$200,000
- Reduce Increase to 3510 (Repairs) \$8,137
- Contract Athletic Trainer \$35,000
- Ice-Hockey \$25,000
- Coaching Positions - Transport \$28,668
- MHS Club Stipends \$40,000
- Iling French Program \$52,769
- MHS French Teacher \$52,769

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|-----------------------------------|--|
| • PE Teacher 1.0 K-12<br>\$52,769 | • Grades 4 & 5 Orchestra<br>\$159,739    |
| • MHS Teacher 1.0 \$52,769        | • Gifted & Talented Program<br>\$303,941 |
| • Grades 4 & 5 Band<br>\$159,162  |  |

Other Budget Reductions being considered include:

- Elimination of Middle School sports
- Elimination of Freshman Sports Teams
- Elimination of MS Tech Ed
- Elimination of MS Sewing Instruction
- Closing of Swimming Pool/Elimination of Swim Team
- Elimination or Reduction of Shared Services with the Town
- Reduction of 10 Paraprofessionals
- Use of Town controlled ECS funding to reduce magnet school tuition
- Reduce 2-4 elementary school teachers

Dr. Kisiel reviewed that the increase in the teacher's salaries accounts for approximately 3% of the required budget increase, leaving about 0.1% for all other inflation if the anticipated 3.1% increase goes through.

Dr. Kisiel clarified some of the items on the suggested budget reductions list, including the athletic trainer full time position being \$70,000, so the reduction represents contracting out services instead; ice-hockey serves approximately 3-5 students who play with another team; MHS club stipends total \$160,000, so \$40,000 is a reduction to some clubs that do not have the membership necessary to justify the funding; and the coaching positions include a reduction of some assistant coaching positions. Dr. Kisiel reviewed that if the French Program is cut, the students currently in French will still have the opportunity over the next few years to complete their studies for college requirements, before it is phased out completely. Dr. Kisiel noted that if the elementary school teachers are reduced it will necessitate classroom sizes of approximately 26 students.

Dr. Kisiel pointed out that he had chosen to keep the recommended ELL teacher in the budget. He also reviewed that more than 900 computers were recently purchased through the Alliance Grant.

**Mr. Pattacini** thanked the administration for this potential reduction list. He noted that usually we are given the budget number from the town and then recommend the cuts, but given the nature of the reductions this year, the Board felt it was important to talk about the impact this would have with the community well in advance.

**Ms. Walton** had asked for a comparison of Manchester teacher salaries with those of East Hartford previously, which Dr. Kisiel had supplied tonight. She notes in the past we have lost teachers after 3-8 years, and that we are competing against East Hartford, who pays their teachers more money. The 2.7% increase to teacher salaries, which accounts for 3% of the budget increase, was necessary to retain our teachers and she commends the Board for raising the salaries. She was shocked at the difference in salaries for surrounding towns.

Ms. Walton noted that we are now faced with cutting programs that draw people into our town because we have failed to invest in education over the last few years and if we continue to not invest, we will continue to see painful cuts. She feels it is important for the town to hear what the taxpayers want as well.

**Mr. Leon** stated that now is the time for Manchester residents to make a decision and talk to the Board of Directors. Nobody wants to make these cuts. We are not closing the achievement gap by any of this. We need to slowly start adding programs to close the gap. The town needs to understand that raising taxes is hard, but if the school system is not there the young families will not move here. We have great schools, teachers, and administrators, but we have to fund them properly and make a statement. He encourages the public to tell the Board of Directors how they feel. We need community support...do we want leaf pickup or student achievement? Mr. Leon noted that if we don't stand up to voice our wants, the Board of Directors will not hear us.

**Ms. Luxenberg** stated that the last four years budgets have made her wonder what this says about our values as a community, with looking at less than a 1% increase in 2009 and continually underfunding the budget for years. Looking at other communities and their budget increases, it seems they value public education. Ms. Luxenberg feels that public education is a great equalizer and a right given to every student. Ms. Luxenberg feels that her role as an elected official on the Board of Education is to provide a great education for our children, not just an adequate one. She hears what Ms. Slogesky says about the music program and being drawn to those program, as well as what Ms. Schutz says about focusing on education. We have to encourage opportunities that are fostering creativity, innovation, teamwork, and leadership – qualities that cannot necessarily be measured. If we are making these cuts, what is that saying to our children, our community, and surrounding communities? This effects everyone, even those without children in our system, as it effects house sales, if people don't want to come to Manchester because we don't have a strong enough school system. She implores the public, don't become part of the silent majority – speak up. We

cannot afford to let these cuts happen to our community. Ms. Luxenberg asks that we do the right thing for our children in Manchester.

**Ms. Walton** applauded the willingness of the Superintendent to be transparent about the suggested budget cuts and invites the public to voice their input. Ms. Walton thanked the administration for their decision to keep the ELL teacher. She wondered when the last time the SPED budget came in under budget by \$200,000? Ms. Matfess stated never. Ms. Walton noted we can cut the projection for that, but in the end it would not really be a cut. As for the ten paraprofessionals, she is hesitant to cut those positions as they tried to cut them last year and in the end they were all hired back due to IEP requirements. She feels it is not realistic to try to cut them again.

As for the MHS club stipends, Ms. Walton asked for clarity. Dr. Kisiel noted that the middle school runs their after school programs with approximately \$8,000 in stipends, while the high school has \$165,000 in stipends. The \$40,000 reduction will apply to those clubs that do not have significant membership.

Ms. Walton asked for clarity on the PE K-12 teacher. Dr. Kisiel noted this is an adaptive PE teacher that works throughout the district incorporating wellness and health into the program.

**Mr. Leon** stated to Ms. Walton that when you put a slight brake to a program, it never goes back, and that is not acceptable. As a Board we have a great administrators present from each school to hold them accountable for what they are doing, however we can't continue to hold them accountable if we don't provide what they need. That is not fair. Mr. Leon feels it is not acceptable to cut high school programs as the electives and clubs are one of the reasons families and students choose MHS over private or magnet options. If they start choosing magnet schools over MHS, that will cost us more money in the end.

**Mr. Pattacini** stated that there are a number of items the Board members seem concerned about. He feels it would be helpful if the administration could put numbers to the additional items listed. He agrees that the reduction of the SPED projection is not a wise idea, nor reducing the 3510 account back to the base level, which is the bare minimum.

Mr. Pattacini asked for clarity on the coaching/transportation figure of \$28,000. Dr. Kisiel noted that represents 5 assistant coaching positions and transporting some teams, such as baseball, to other locations.

Mr. Pattacini asked for clarity on the club stipends. Mrs. Brooks reviewed that club stipends are awarded to teachers on a point system of \$270 per point,

with 4 points being the lowest number given to a teacher for supervising a club, and as much as \$4,000-\$5,000 being given, with \$1,500 being about average, depending on how much time the teacher is required to provide.

Mr. Pattacini directed the administration to review the town agreements regarding shared services.

Mr. Pattacini supports the views of the various Board members. He noted he feels there are two types of students we see in town, the Princeton football scholarship recipient and the ELL student new to our country. There is diversity in this community and more and more we are forced to choose between these types of students. Both the gifted and talented program and the music program helps students all throughout our district. These programs help foster students to become thoughtful, creative members of our society. While we need to focus on student testing, we also need to focus on creativity and problem solving, and these kinds of programs are the exactly the kinds of programs that the children in Manchester need to take advantage of. Mr. Pattacini notes this does not need to be a fight, but we need to have a community dialogue about this and show the Board of Directors our priorities to guide them. Mr. Pattacini noted that town funding is also getting cut and the community needs to share their views.

#### **F. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

None.

#### **G. NEW BUSINESS**

None.

#### **H. COMMUNICATIONS**

**Dr. Kisiel** is concerned that the Educator Evaluation and Support System cannot be fully implemented in the first year. The Commissioner presented an option on how to evaluate 1/3 of the teaching staff in the next school year and we have to decide how to proceed. He will be sharing the teacher evaluation document next month. Dr. Kisiel notes that the State has realized this cannot be implemented 100% at once.

**Mr. Leon** stated that the Chair had remarked this is not a fight about the budget, but Mr. Leon feels this is a fight for educational opportunities for all of Manchester and he is prepared to fight for that.

**Mr. Scappaticci** noted that the MHS musical, *Anything Goes*, starts this Thursday with the Board Chair's daughter as one of the leads.

**Ms. Luxenberg** noted that as we look at cuts we should realize that programs like Sock-n-Buskin and the music program may not be there in the future. As our President says, out educate us today – out compete us tomorrow.

### **I. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

None.

### **J. PUBLIC COMMENTS** (Limited to items on tonight's agenda)

Michele Gara Grady, 165 Henry Street, has four children, three of whom attend Manchester schools. She volunteers at Bowers, is PTSA President at Bennett, and knows first hand the dedication the staff has to the students. She notes there are fabulous things happening at Bennett and she is concerned about the budget cuts. She believes in Manchester and its education system. When her family moved from Chicago they looked for diversity in choosing their new town and Manchester is rich in diversity and offers a lot of great programs in our school and community. Even those families that leave town because of the schools will come back for our library and our rec program. Her two main concerns about the proposed cuts are the PE program and the Gifted & Talented program. Regarding PE she feels children need to release energy, have fun, and incorporate a wellness program that many kids don't get at home. Regarding Gifted & Talented, if this is cut what do we do with the kids that have already mastered the skills being taught? We need to keep those students engaged and challenged, as being bored often leads to behavior problems. She has two children in the Gifted program and notes that Nancy Eastlake has run this great program for approximately six years and we are lucky to have the program. Ms. Grady agrees with Board members that we need to prioritize our town's values and in a leaves vs. children question it is a no brainer.

Mr. Tom Stringfellow, 183 Hillstown Road, notes that no matter if you are single without children, retired, etc., we all count. He hopes the Board follows through with their recommendations and wonders if the public voice will be heard. He again asks that we not use the term "sub-group" but instead cluster students or some other term. Mr. Stringfellow would like to see the Gifted program remain in the budget and be more open to students of color that are capable. He asks that Dr. Eastlake come before the full Board in the near future to give an update. He commends Dr. Kisiel's presentation regarding security. He referred to MCC's recent lockdown on campus. Mr. Stringfellow recommended an article on mental health in the January 27<sup>th</sup> *Courant*. He feels we are doing a good job academically and that not all students go to college, some choose culinary, mechanical, or technical fields.

### **K. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS**

**Ms. Luxenberg** would like to hear about the Illing uniform pilot relatively soon. Dr. Kisiel noted that in the next week a survey of parents in grades K-7 will go out for their opinion and the issue will be decided in the next month.

**L. ADJOURNMENT**

**Mr. Pattacini called for a motion to adjourn.**

**Secretary Leon moved and Mr. Crockett seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting.**

**8/0 - Voted in favor.**

**Adjournment 9:22 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

Neal Leon  
Board Secretary